



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

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CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

**MAYOR EMANUEL AND ALDERMAN O'SHEA KICK-OFF SECOND ANNUAL OPERATION
HELP-A-HERO TO SUPPORT FORMERLY HOMELESS VETERANS**

The inaugural drive raised \$500,000 worth of goods for veterans citywide

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and 19th Ward Alderman Matthew O'Shea today announced the return of Operation Help-A-Hero, a citywide household item collection drive to assist formerly homeless Veterans moving to permanent housing. Throughout the month of June, residents can donate new, store bought products for a formerly homeless veteran at one of over 60 designated drop-off locations throughout the City.

"As we approach Memorial Day, it is important that we remember our fallen heroes and do everything we can to support our brave veterans who call this city home," said Mayor Emanuel. "Chicago continues working to end homelessness among veterans and our success is a testament to the hard work of our residents and partners who have come together to help those who are struggling to get back on their feet."

Operation Help-A-Hero officially begins on Memorial Day, May 29 and will run through the 4th of July.

The Mayor and Aldermen throughout the city are calling on residents to participate in the collection drive by dropping off new cleaning products, kitchen supplies, toiletries and other items at their local ward offices or at one of 14 participating park district locations.

"Many of our veterans are living without basic necessities that you and I take for granted, Operation Help-a-Hero is a simple but effective way for all Chicagoans to address that problem and show our veterans the respect and appreciation they deserve," said Alderman O'Shea.

Last year's inaugural collection drive raised \$500,000 worth of goods to help formerly homeless veteran. The items help assist thousands of veterans to successfully live independently.

Led by Alderman O'Shea and the 19th Ward, the Operation Help-A-Hero drive includes partnerships between Aldermanic Ward offices, the Chicago Park District and Military Outreach USA, a faith based non-profit organization supporting those who have served in the United States' armed services

All donations will be collected by Military Outreach USA, and will be distributed by the Jesse Brown Veterans' Affairs Medical Center.

A list of the most commonly requested items can be found at www.cityofchicago.org/helpahero

This effort builds on the Ending Veteran's Homelessness Initiative (EVHI), through which the City has housed more than 2,200 formerly homeless veterans. The City of Chicago, through EVHI, is working hard to create a system where any episode of homelessness is rare and brief.

Since taking office, Mayor Emanuel has made key investments to support continued education and employment for Veterans. To ensure that all Veterans and military Service Members are able to secure housing and to prevent discrimination in the housing application process, the City's Council on Human Relations approved the Mayor's ordinance making Veterans, active military personnel, reservists and National Guard members a protected class.

In 2016, Mayor Emanuel launched a new resource website designed to improve coordination of citywide resources to better meet the needs of Chicago's military Veterans. By directing the City's 311 service call center operators to ask callers up front if they are Veterans, operators are able to identify the most appropriate resources and programs that are available. Ultimately, this information helps the city tailor, target, and allocates the right resources for future programs and services to better serve Veterans.

For more information on Operation Help-A-Hero or for a complete list of drop off locations, visit www.cityofchicago.org/helpahero.

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